

Satisfaction Levels of Cooperative Partners in The New World Order: Case of Çukobirlik

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ABSTRACT

The continuity of the organizations is directly proportional to the satisfaction of the service recipients. The presence of many partners, beneficiaries and employees in cooperatives requires high cooperation. Therefore, it is important to reveal the service quality of the cooperatives and to determine the expectations of the partners. This study was carried out in Çukobirlik, which ranks third in Turkey cooperatives and first among the agricultural cooperatives in terms of number of partners, with the aim of determining the partners' service satisfaction, their perception related to cooperative activities and their intentions for diversification of these activities. 831 surveys were applied. 94.8% of the participants in the study are men and the agricultural production experience of 76.4% of them is over 21 years. It was seen that the satisfaction level of the partners from Çukobirlik's services is high in all dimensions, and the dimensions of assurance, competency and enthusiasm came to the fore compared to other dimensions. With the global pandemic of Covid-19, it has once again manifested itself that agricultural production is an activity that is the first and most affected by all extraordinary situations and affects all humanity with its results. The collective production model is a guarantee of sustainability.

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Yeni Dünya Düzeninde Kooperatif Ortaklarının Memnuniyet Düzeyleri: Çukobirlik Örneği

ÖZET

Örgütlerin devamlılığı hizmet alanların memnuniyeti ile doğru orantılıdır. Kooperatiflerde çok sayıda ortak, yararlanıcı ve çalışanların varlığı iş birliğinin yüksek olmasını gerektirir. Bu nedenle kooperatiflerin hizmet kalitesinin ortaya konulması ve ortakların beklentilerinin belirlenmesi önemlidir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki kooperatifler içerisinde ortak sayısı bakımından 3. sırada olan, tarımsal kooperatifler arasında da ilk sırada yer alan tarım satış kooperatiflerinde ortakların hizmetlerden memnuniyeti, kooperatif faaliyetleri ile ilgili algıları ve faaliyetlerin çeşitlenmesine yönelik niyetlerini belirlemek amacıyla Çukobirlik özelinde yapılmıştır. Çukobirlik'in faaliyetinin olduğu 11 ilde gönüllülük esasına göre 831 ortakla yüz yüze olarak anket uygulanmıştır. Çalışmaya katılanların %94.8'i erkek olup, %76.4'ünün tarımsal üretim deneyimi 21 yılın üzerindedir. Ortakların Çukobirlik'in hizmetlerinden memnuniyet düzeyleri her boyutta yüksek olduğu görülmüş olup, güvence ve yeterlilik boyutu ile heveslilik boyutu diğer boyutlara nazaran öne çıkmıştır. Tarımsal üretim faaliyetinin tüm olağanüstü durumlardan ilk ve en fazla etkilenen, sonuçları ile tüm insanlığı etkileyen bir faaliyet olduğu, küresel düzeyde yaşanan COVID-19 kaynaklı pandemi ile bir kez daha kendisini göstermiştir. Kolektif üretim modeli sürdürülebilirliğin bir güvencesidir.

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture takes place under different risks and uncertainties due to its nature. It is very important to support agricultural production and producers through various tools and policies to reduce these risks and uncertainties. One of the important tools to eliminate risks is the organization of producers. The basis of agricultural organization is based on cooperatives, and its purpose is for people to come together and cooperate (Bilgin et al., 2007). As cooperatives dating back to 1800's still continues to be an important model in the world, cooperatives in Turkey have begun to decline after the year 1980 (Altınkaya, 2010). The largest shareholder of the economic organization in the agricultural sector in Turkey are agricultural cooperatives (Yercan, 2007). In addition to their important duties and responsibilities in the continuity of agricultural production, creating added value and trade, the role of cooperatives, including producers in a wide range of products, in regulating the market and protecting the rights of their partners is also important. One of the most important factors that distinguish cooperative enterprises from other types of companies is that the priority and benefit of the society are their main objectives. In addition, it is a priority to create an organization in which the works that are beneficial to do together are made in cooperation and to continue this organization by considering social responsibilities. The most important factors for the creation of such a structure are that the partners have unity of purpose, know each other and have socio-economic relations with each other (Ertan and Kaya, 2012).

The wide field of activity and the number of partners require observing the services provided by cooperatives from a larger perspective. Scientific researches on cooperatives started in the early 20th century. The first studies were carried out in France, the Soviet Union, Greece, USA, Belgium and Germany and continued to be the subject of research for many years. First edition in Turkey is Ethem Nejat's (1910) "Our Country and Cooperative Companies" that he wrote in the Journal of Ottoman Agriculture and Commerce. Research on cooperatives, especially in the agricultural sector, increased after the 1980's. Regional, local studies are more dominant in the literature. Although it has been done in different regions and with different cooperatives, many studies have been directed to evaluate the activities of cooperatives (Şahin et al., 2013; Erdem, 2018; Topuz and Bozoğlu, 2016; Çayabatmaz, 2014; Duguid et al., 2015; Aktoprak, 2019). In addition, research that determines the socio-economic structures of cooperative partners (Yercan, 1996; Acar and Yıldırım, 2000; Dedeoğlu and Yıldırım, 2006; Ünal and Yercan, 2006; Özdemir, 2005; Serinikli and İnan, 2007; Yücel and Acar, 2018) have been

widely covered in the literature over the years. Researches about the satisfaction and partner relationships of cooperative partners have revealed important findings in increasing the efficiency of cooperatives (Kendircioğlu, 2008; Özdemir et al., 2014; Topuz and Bozoğlu, 2015; Ertan and Kaya, 2012; Everest and Yercan, 2016; Ertan and Turan, 2001; Bilgin et al., 2007; Alçıçek and Karlı, 2016; Kılıç, 2011; Kinikli and Yercan, 2017; Engin, 2018; Kara et al., 2016). In recent years, beyond being an intermediary institution, cooperatives have expanded their fields of activity and started to take on the role of producers and retailers. In addition to consumer and cooperative relations, they have brand and advertisement oriented works (Oğuz and Mete, 2017; Baş and Göral, 2018; Everest et al., 2018; Alagöz et al., 2018).

The continuity of agricultural production is more important in extraordinary situations such as wars, economic crises, embargoes, natural disasters, and pandemic risks. Providing food safety is possible with strong organization. Production planning in line with the country's needs, crop processing, distribution and delivery to consumers at affordable prices can only be created with a culture of solidarity. The address of this organization and culture are cooperatives. It is essential that cooperatives are effective and productive. Organizing and acting together in the fields with a large number of beneficiaries is of great benefit to the producer, organization, consumer and society in general. In a sector with many producers, intermediaries and buyers, such as the agricultural sector, the success of the organization depends on the commitment of the members to the organizations, their trust and satisfaction. It is very important in terms of widespread effect in organizations that have many partners/members and operate in large geographies.

This study was carried out to reveal Çukobirlik partners' satisfaction from cooperative activities, their perceptions about these activities and their intentions for diversification of activities. Although many studies on cooperatives are encountered in the literature, these studies include limited number of partners and results at a local level. Apart from the study which Bilgin and Kuzey (2013) investigated the cooperative managers' charismatic leadership behavior, partner cooperation and performance satisfaction and put forward the fact that the loyalty of the partners strongly affects the cooperation, no study particular in Çukobirlik was identified that aimed to participate in the activities of the cooperative. It is obvious that the results obtained with the originality of this research in terms of scope and purpose will cover a wide audience.

Cooperatives and the Importance of Cooperatives in Agriculture

It is an indisputable fact that acting with organization

and cooperation is as old as human history. In the early ages, while people were still living in tribal form, they first used their physical power in the caves. In particular, they were frightened by the natural phenomena that they could not understand and make sense of, and therefore could not define, with their power of understanding. They needed to hunt to survive and come together in small groups to be protected from wild animals and neighbors' looting. For these basic needs, coming together, doing shared work, working together and solidarity, which are a feature of human nature, have manifested themselves under various purposes for many thousands of years. This basic motive has become an integral element of the general characteristics of societies and, on the one hand, has been influenced by the development of societies, and on the other hand has developed societies. Acting together for solidarity and common benefit is not just for economic interests.

The root of cooperatives is based on the word "Cooperatio", which means cooperation in Latin language. The word "cooperatis", on the other hand, actually means "to cooperate". "The broad meaning of cooperatives or cooperation is collective activity, combining the effort and opportunities and working together in a harmonious way to achieve a result that a large audience is looking for" (Çıkmış and Karacan, 1994). Another frequently used definition of the cooperative is "the unification attempt of people who come together with their main desires and wills such as production collaboration, credit, employment, residence procurement, and create a workplace and business with their own economic efforts to meet these needs" (Fındıkoğlu, 1967). On the other hand, from economic perspective, cooperatives are to bring together economic powers through solidarity in order to offer the consumers the things they cannot do alone or benefit from doing together in the best way, at cost price (Mülayim, 1992).

Cooperatives also come to the fore with their social aspects as producers' organizations that provide solutions to many common problems of the society in the most appropriate way and also provide space, time and material benefits (Haseki, 2007). The organization system provides producers with advantages such as getting more shares from added value, reducing agricultural input costs, better product prices, ease of obtaining technical information, and increasing bargaining power. In addition to this, organization gives an opportunity to the authorities that determine the agricultural policies to make balanced decisions by establishing a dialogue with one or more organizations representing the producers. In short, the knowledge that farmer organizations constitute the basic element of agricultural development in developed countries shows that organization is inevitable and necessary (Ceylan, 2019).

Cooperatives, dating back to the 1800's, form an important social economic model in the world. Cooperatives, which are a social institution as well as an economic institution, are based on the seven basic principles of cooperatives accepted by the International Cooperative Union. Beyond the active economic participation of the partners, these principles are the elements that support the economic and financial success of the cooperative.

Cooperatives, which had important roles and successful practices in the past, lost its power from time to time in the face of rapid industrialization. However, the fact that the organized, collective approach has gained strong market and marketing capability since the 1990's has led to re-appreciation of cooperatives. Thus, it has entered a reconstruction process. As a result of the changes in economic and social life and public administration understanding, the world has turned towards reducing the role of states in economic and social areas, liberalizing and localizing administrative, political and economic structures, moving from planned economy to market economy and balancing the development of different economic sectors. In this process, the need for formations that can meet the unmet economic and social needs of the society in the best way by playing an active role in the areas discharged by the public authority has increased rapidly. In many developed countries, economic solidarity organizations, such as cooperatives, which have their own responsibilities, have largely filled this gap (Ministry of Customs and Trade, 2012). At the same time, the positive results of the organized movements of the producers in the European Union, the efforts of the World Trade Organization to support the collective structures such as cooperatives among the practices that do not disturb the competition conditions, and efforts to shorten the distance between the producer and the consumer have become the factors motivating the reconstruction. As a part of the "short supply chain" concept, which was first included in the EU Rural Development Program in 2016, the role of cooperatives has become even more important. In the legislation published within the scope of this program, it was pronounced as "the proximity of social and geographical relations among local development and producers, manufacturing industry and consumers, including a limited number of intermediaries". The main purpose is to confront both producers and consumers with less cost, in a sustainable food quality. This coincides with the basic principles of cooperatives.

Cooperatives, which is regarded as the third sector besides the private and public ones in the economic and social development of developed countries, continues to be the most common model that can enable people to organize in line with common goals (Sayın and Sayın, 2004). Today, cooperatives have performed better than

many multinational companies as part of a network system at local, regional and global levels in many parts of the world. According to the International Cooperatives Union's Global 300 study in 2019, the 2017 turnover of the world's top 300 cooperatives (\$ 2,035 billion) is higher than the 12 EU member and candidate countries' (Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Turkey) GDP (\$ 1,942 billion). It is also close to the GDP of Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam) (International Cooperation Alliance, 2019). This high turnover, is equivalent to approximately 3 times the GDP Turkey which ranks 20th in the 2017 ranking of world GDP (IMF, 2020). While Turkey has the highest number of cooperatives in Europe along with Italy, France, and Spain, it is not among the countries that has the highest annual turnover. France (307 € billion), Germany (195 € billion), Italy (150 € billion) and the Netherlands (81 € billion) are the countries with the highest annual turnover in Europe. Agriculture is an industry with an annual turnover of more than 39% (347 € billion) of the total cooperative turnover in Europe (Cocolina and Cooperatives Europe, 2016). There are 250,000 cooperatives in the EU that hold 163 million citizens (one third of the EU population) and employ 5,4 million people (Anonymous, 2020a).

Products in Turkey that carry the brand of agricultural cooperatives are also located on the shelves. Many local cooperative products such as Torku, which has the widest production line, Atatürk Forest Farm, Trakya Birlik, Tariş, Agricultural Credit Cooperatives, Fiskobirlik, products of university faculties of agriculture and Ovacık Agricultural Development Cooperative are offered to consumers.

Agricultural Cooperatives in Turkey

In the Turkish society, cooperatives are a concept that is based on assistance and collaboration with names such as "give and take", "guild" and "akhism which means working together (Başaran et al. 2015). Even though similar practices dates much back in Turkey, in cooperative approach began to show itself with the increasing importance of the State's regulatory aspect in the Republican Era.

According to 2017 data, there are 30,659 cooperatives with 5,788,239 partners operating in Turkey. 40% of them is related to agricultural activity and 68% of the total partners are registered in these cooperatives (National Cooperative Union of Turkey, 2018). The most active cooperatives in the agricultural sector belong to the agricultural development cooperatives. The highest number of partners is in the Beet Planters Cooperative, depending on the width and prevalence of the production area in the historical process

(1,409,721). This is followed by the Agricultural Credit Cooperative (911,218), the Agricultural Development Cooperative (758,801) and the Agricultural Sales Cooperative (533,456).

Çukobirlik, where this study was designed, is a Cooperative Union formed by 275 partners in Adana, Ceyhan and Tarsus Agricultural Sales Cooperatives on the date 15.10.1940 in order to evaluate the products of cotton producers in Çukurova region and to provide support to the producer. It was reconstructed in 1985. In 1989, it was assembled with the "Peanut Agricultural Sales Cooperatives Union" of which the short name was "Yerfiskobirlik" and the title of the institution was changed as "Çukurova Cotton, Peanut and Oilseeds Agricultural Sales Cooperatives Union". As it can be clearly seen from the Çukobirlik 2019-2023 Strategic Plan prepared in 2019, Çukobirlik serves approximately 34,000 productive partners with 36 Cooperatives covering 11 provinces from Mersin to Bismil, from Batman to Hatay. Çukobirlik, which processes cotton, sunflower, peanut, canola and soybean, which it bought through Affiliated Cooperatives, has 7 SAWGIN factories and 5 ROLLERGIN enterprises. Because the machinery technology of the factories is old, the enterprises work at 60% capacity. Total capacity is 1,048,320 kg per day (20 hours). Some of the enterprises are rented out and some of them are not operated since there is no product to process (Çukobirlik, 2019). The construction of the biodiesel facility, which will produce in accordance with the EU norms, was completed on the basis of providing service to Çukobirlik partners with the understanding of "Bring the oilseed, take the biodiesel" within the Çukobirlik Center Integrated Facilities. This facility has a processing capacity of 120 tons/day with 2,000 m² open and 800 m² closed area (Çukobirlik, 2019).

Çukobirlik has a Central Oil Factory on Adana – Mersin highway and an Oil Factory in Ceyhan. Çukobirlik's Central Oil Factory can process oilseeds such as cottonseed, sunflower, canola and soy with its modern extraction system. The Central Oil Factory has an average of 330 tons/day cottonseed, 250 tons/day soy, 250 tons/day sunflower and 230 tons/day canola processing capacity. The Central Oil Factory has 30,000 tons of cottonseed, 5,000 tons of shell, 3,000 tons of pulp, 18,000 tons of crude and neutral oil, 500 tons of refined oil and 8,000 tons of soy storage capacity. In the factory, while soap is produced as a by-product and pulp and linter used in the feed industry as waste product. Ceyhan Oil Factory, on the other hand, has an average of 220 tons/day soy, 190 tons/day sunflower and 180 tons/day canola processing capacity (Çukobirlik, 2019).

The market value of mass cotton, sunflower and soybean prices in the region is formed by the price determination of Çukobirlik. The waiting of

institutions and organizations operating in the same field of activity in the market for the price to be announced by Çukobirlik and explaining their prices then, also show the presence, effectiveness and balancing role of Çukobirlik in the market.

MATERIAL and METHOD

The main material of the research consists of the data obtained from the face-to-face survey conducted with the Çukobirlik partner producers. In this questionnaire, besides the questions asked to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of the partners, there is also the SERVQUAL service quality scale adapted by the authors. The surveys were conducted in 11 provinces in the Çukobirlik field of activity, on a voluntary basis and 831 questionnaires that were pre-checked were evaluated.

In the analysis of the data, besides descriptive statistical methods, factor analysis and reliability analysis, which are among the multivariate statistical analysis methods, were also used. In addition, IBM SPSS Statistics 26 Beta version and Excel program were used in the analysis of the data.

Sampling Method:

While determining the people to be included in the study, stratified random sampling technique which is one of the probability sampling methods was used. The main mass of the study was grouped according to the provinces in which Çukobirlik operates, and then randomly, people were included in the sample in proportion to the number of members from each province. A questionnaire was requested by reaching all the identified partners, but some partners refused to participate in the study. For this reason, a number of people as much as the number of people who did not answer the questionnaires were chosen randomly again and the data collection process was completed. Also, since some partners were found to fill the questionnaire sloppy, their responses were not evaluated.

The sample size representing the population of the number of active partners in Çukobirlik has been calculated by the formula (1).

$$n = \frac{\times^2 Npq}{d^2(N-1) + \times^2 pq} \quad (1)$$

Here, n; the sample large size, \times^2 ; table value (3.841 for 5% significance), N; population large size (approximately 11000), p; population ratio (0.5 was accepted) and d; accuracy or margin of error (taken as 0.05). When these values are written in the formula (1); It is obtained as n = 371

$$n = \frac{(3,841).(11000).(0,5).(0,5)}{0,05^2(11000-1) + (3,841).(0,5).(0,5)} \approx 371.$$

As can be seen, with an margin of error 5%, the minimum sample size required for the study was calculated as approximately 371 persons. For of the study is more reliable, the sample size in the study was kept higher than this value (831 people).

Analysis Method:

In the study, the SERVQUAL scale, which is frequently used in the literature in the measurement of service quality, was adapted and used. SERVQUAL and SERVPERF scales come first among the methods used to measure service quality. SERVQUAL scale is a five-dimensional scale consisting of 22 items developed by Parasuman et al. (1988). In this scale, the items of physical structure, equipment and field staff, refer to the tangibility dimension, reliable and fast delivery of the promised service refer to the reliability dimension, willingness/enthusiasm to assist the consumer in service-related situations refers to the responsiveness dimension, the employers' knowledge and sense of trust they create on interlocutors refer to the assurance dimension and, finally, the employers' individual empathy and attention to the customers refer to the empathy dimension. The 5-point Likert-type proposals prepared to reveal their perceptions were asked for the evaluation of the partners in the service area of Çukobirlik.

Explanatory factor analysis was applied to the obtained data. As a result of the analysis, the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) sampling adequacy measure was calculated as 0.940, Bartlett's spherical test chi-square value was calculated as 11320.309 ($p < .05$) and it was determined that the data was suitable and sufficient for factor analysis. Cronbach's Alpha value was obtained as 0.931 when reliability analysis was performed, thus, it was determined that the reliability of the data was very high. As a result of the explanatory factor analysis, the dimensions of the SERVQUAL scale were determined as reliability, enthusiasm, tangibility, empathy, responsiveness and assurance. Regarding the expressions belonging to these dimensions, the average of satisfaction levels of the partners was calculated and which expressions are above and which are below the average were determined.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

General Findings

In order to reveal the satisfaction of the agricultural sales cooperative partners from the cooperative and their opinions about diversification of the cooperative activities particularly in Çukobirlik, an analysis of the face-to-face survey data was conducted. Descriptive findings related to this are first presented in Table 1. According to this table, it is seen that only 5.2% of the participants are women, about half of them are over 50 years old and therefore 76.4% of them have farming

experiences more than 21 years. As general population is aging in Turkey, farming population is also aging rapidly. According to TURKSTAT data, the middle age increased from 28.3 in 2007 to 32.4 in 2019 (TÜİK, 2020) and the average age of rural residents was 55 (Arısoy, 2019). In addition, rapid migration from rural to urban areas continues due to the low level of agricultural income, shortcomings in the social and cultural infrastructure of rural areas, terrorism, finding new job opportunities and education. In 2019,

the share of people living in towns and villages fell by 0.5 points to 7.2% compared to the previous year, and the ratio of people older than 65 increased by 2 points to 9.1% (TÜİK, 2020). The education level of 43.6% of those living in these regions is at primary school or literacy level, and the only source of income of 52.7% of them are agricultural activities. This also explains the low level of income. Approximately 40% of the partners own a workplace in parallel with agricultural activity.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics.

Çizelge 1. Tanımlayıcı Bulgular.

Household size	Percentage (%)	Age	Percentage (%)
1-2	23.5	< 29	1.3
3-5	53.8	30-39	13.2
6-8	21.3	40-49	36.4
>9	1.4	> 50	49.1
Gender	Percentage (%)	Social security	Percentage (%)
Female	5.2	Pension Fund	8.3
Male	94.8	Agriculture SSI	80.9
Marital status	Percentage (%)	Social Security Organization for Artisans and self-employed	0.4
Married	95.4	Private Insurance	0.5
Single	4.6	None	10.0
Education	Percentage (%)	Non-agricultural work	Percentage (%)
Literate-Primary School	43.6	Self-employed	40.1
Elementary School	19.3	Officer	3.2
High School	28.3	Employer	4.0
Undergraduate and above	8.8	None	52.7
Income (Month)	Percentage(%)	Agricultural experiences (year)	Percentage (%)
<1500	13.6	< 10	5.3
1501-3000	42.4	11-20	18.2
3001-4500	14.3	21-30	29.3
4501-600	15.1	31-40	26.6
>6001	14.6	>41	20.5
Use of Internet	Percentage (%)	Willingness to use mobile app	Percentage (%)
Yes	57	Yes	67
No	43	No	33

Ercan et al. (2019) stated that modern practices should be followed in order for Turkey to remain strong in agriculture and emphasized that breaking the prejudices about the use of these practices will be possible by encouraging cooperative and shared use. Although there are weaknesses such as high average of age, low level of education, inadequate infrastructure studies and policies, and dependency on foreign countries, they stated that farmers' starting to have knowledge and awareness about smart agriculture will create positive results in this regard. In this study, it is supported by the findings that the partners are more likely to use mobile technologies. In order to lead its partners in line with the principles of education, training, information, cooperation and social responsibility, and to get their opinions on the

use of technology in agriculture, the voluntary use of a mobile application developed by the cooperative was determined. In the findings, it was seen that the use of internet among "the employees of agriculture, forestry and fishery" (38.6%) (ÖİKR, 2018a) is above the Turkey average (57%) and willingness to use the mobile application was determined as 67%. The use of smart technologies in agriculture will increase productivity, quality and added value, by working less but smarter and obtaining more quality products with fewer resources (ÖİKR, 2018b).

Findings on the Production Activities of the Partners and their Relationship with the Cooperative

The total area covered by the surveyed partners is

164,250 decares, 78% of which is property (Fig. 1). The largest production area (68,765 decares) is devoted to cotton agriculture, the main field of activity of the cooperative. Wheat comes second and its total area is 37,649 decares. Although the cooperative covers a wide geographical area and spans the region with wide ecological features, the product diversification of the partners is for products purchased by the public and cooperatives, especially wheat, which has the market guarantee. However, there is also a smaller scale herbal production suitable for the production pattern of the region (Fig. 2). Partners agree to sell these products significantly if they are bought by the cooperative (86.5%). Many successful cooperative brands in the world have been in the market for many years. In the mid-1970s, more than 80 cooperatives sold 300 food products under their own brand in the USA. Many cooperatives have served as leaders in creating quality and standards of diversity and logistics, using test laboratories, and labeling (USDA, 1990). Agricultural cooperatives are important and have a strong market presence in the European food supply chain. Agricultural cooperatives' market share is 83% in the Netherlands, 79% in Finland, 55% in Italy and 50% in France (EPRS, 2019).

In Finland, S group, which has 2,4 million partners and serves as a roof for 19 regional and 6 local cooperatives, operates in the retail and service sector with 1841 types of goods and services. It has the largest fruit and vegetable retail share in Finland and has generated 11,525 million Euro sales revenue in 2018 (S-Ryhma, 2018). In Japan, 37% of households use the products and services of consumer cooperatives. The share of total production of agriculture, forestry and fishery sold by cooperatives is 50% (Anonymous, 2019). 75% of wheat and cereals in Canada, 97% of milk and 96% of flower in the Netherlands, 76% of milk, 70% of cereals, 60% of fresh vegetables and fruits and 55% of all agricultural products in Germany, and 70% of olive oil in Spain are processed and marketed by cooperatives (Vural, 2014).

The high share of cooperative products in the market is a result of consumers' demand for these products. There are also studies showing that in Turkey there is a notable demand for the cooperative products in the market and this demand will increase significantly. In a study conducted in Çanakkale, it was determined that 60% of consumers consume cooperative products regularly and 57.7% of those who do not consume have the potential to become consumers in the future (Everest et al., 2018). In a study conducted in Ankara, it was determined that 22% of consumers prefer the cooperative brand during shopping and the brands they know most are Torku (68%) and Marmarabirlik (14%) (Baş and Göral, 2018). In a study conducted in Konya, it was determined that the use of the image of cooperatives in the brand advertisements of

cooperatives producing food will have a positive effect on consumers (Alagöz et al., 2018). With the idea that Çukobirlik's strong infrastructure and wide range of ecological diversity will be a great opportunity to be active with many products in the market, the volunteers were asked to sell other products they produced to Çukobirlik and a yes response of 87% was received (Table 2). The partners are highly supportive of the cooperative not only in producing but also in selling to the consumer (4.2), and especially expect it to produce vegetable oil (4.4). The rate of willingness to purchase this oil was determined as 4.2 (Fig. 3). Çukobirlik' purchasing and processing other products not only ensures the sales of the partners' products but also allows consumers to access the products through this channel, which is a short supply chain.

The main task of the cooperatives is not only to buy products that are within the scope of the cooperative's core activities, but also to provide in-kind and cash support to ensure the continuity of production and to meet the needs of the partners. Çukobirlik supports the producers of the region as the prices of agricultural fertilizers, pesticides and seeds distributed to the producers are favorable in comparison to market conditions. Prices are not determined in the market until Çukobirlik determine pesticide and fertilizer prices. According to the results of the questionnaire, while its partners supply seeds and pesticides significantly from the cooperative, they supply other inputs from non-cooperative sources. However, there is a high expectation for these inputs to be provided by the cooperative (Table 3).

Cooperative Satisfaction Analysis of Partners

In the marketing field, SERVQUAL model, which is the most used model for measuring service quality, consists of 5 sub-dimensions. In this study, comments were made considering the mean, standard deviation and satisfaction percentage of the items in each sub-dimension (Table 4).

Tangibles include the material elements of the enterprise, the service provider. The partners' satisfaction with these elements is 74.4%. Although this rate is high, satisfaction with the equipment and appearance of buildings and offices is low. It was determined that the element that attracts attention and increase reliability in the **reliability** dimension, which is defined as the ability to perform the promised service accurately and fully, is the sensitivity in keeping error-free records. This is important for the principles of "Economic Participation of the Partner", "Autonomy and Independence", "Education, Training and Informing" which are among the cooperative principles to be fully realized. The overall reliability average was also found noteworthy. Another issue of trust is the impression that employees make on working. In the level of **enthusiasm** expressed as the

knowledge and kindness of employees and the ability to awaken trust, the satisfaction level of the partners were found to be high and the enthusiasm of the employees for helping the partners came to the fore.

Considering the education level and age group of the partners, it is very important that this level of satisfaction is high. The highest level of satisfaction is calculated in **assurance and competency** dimension.

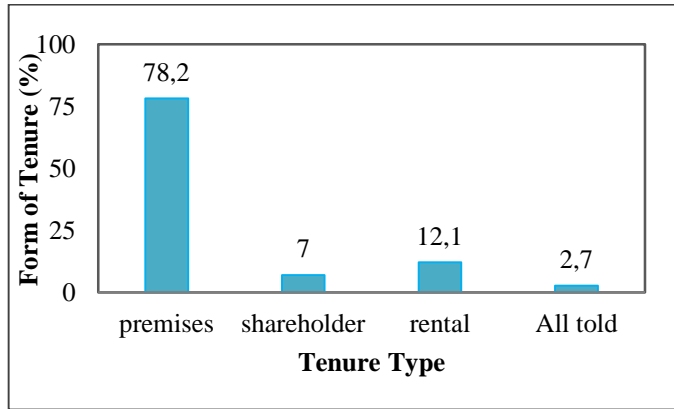


Figure1. Form of Tenure (%)
Şekil 1. İşlenen Alan Biçimi (%)

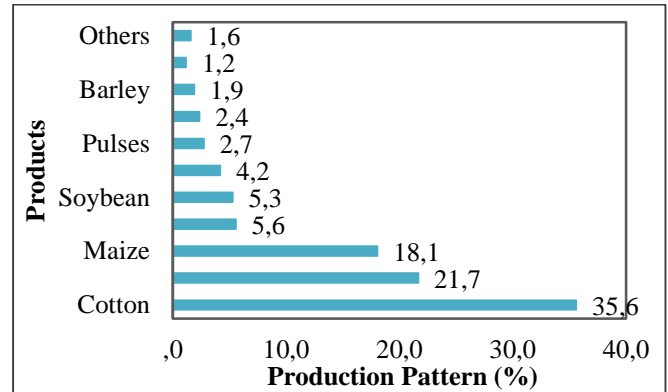


Figure 2. Production Pattern (%)
Şekil 2. Üretim Deseni (%)

Table 2. Sale of Products
(Çizelge 2. Ürünlerin Satışı)

Sold place (Satış yeri)	Percentage (%)	Willingness to sell (Satış gönüllülüğü)	Percentage (%)
Dealer	60.7	Yes	86.5
Çukobirlik	19.6	No	4.3
Çukobirlik and Dealer	8.4	Changeable	0.1
TMO	2.5	Missing value	9.1
Missing value	8.8		

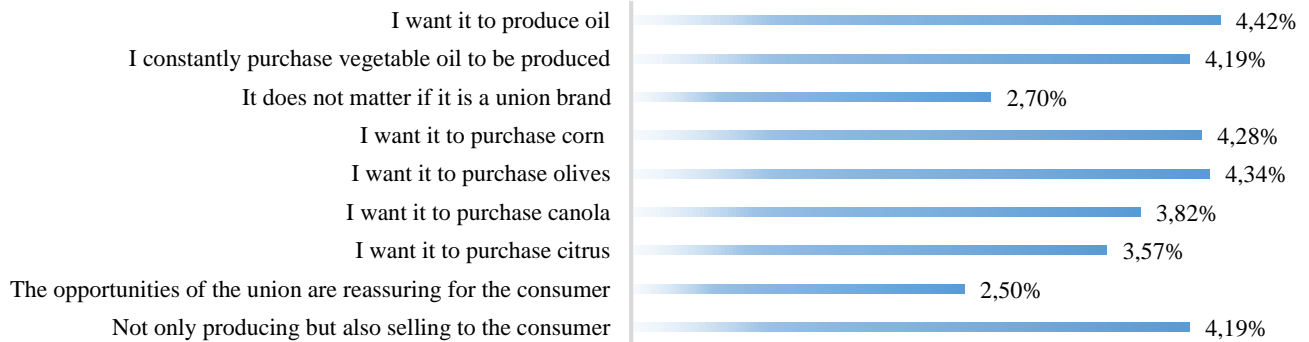


Figure 3. Opinions on Activity Diversification
(Şekil 3. Faaliyetlerini Çeşitlendirmeye İlişkin Görüşler)

Table 3. Attitudes and Behaviours Related to The Supply of Agricultural Inputs (%)
Çizelge 3. Tarımsal Girdilerin Alımı ile İlgili Tutum ve Davranışlar (%)

	Well-Supplied (Sağlanan)	Requested (Talep edilen)
Fertilizer	44.4	55.6
Seed	63.7	36.3
Pesticide	65.2	34.8
Credit	28.6	71.4
Provender	12.5	87.5
Farming Tool	6.0	94.0
Agricultural vehicle	6.5	93.5

Employees' ability to work and the perception of

assurance and competency they give to the partners in carrying out the transactions create the impression that the cooperative is successful in terms of employment policy and employee training. Bilgin et al. (2007) in their study with Tariş partners stated that the increasing trust between the cooperative and the partner positively affects the performance, whereas Şahin et al. (2013) stated that trust in being a partner to the cooperative is an important factor. Employees' personal interest towards partners also has a high sense of satisfaction (*empathy*). The situation that draws attention in this dimension and creates relatively lower satisfaction is that the working hours are not arranged in accordance with the partners.

Agricultural activity cannot be carried out within the standard time frame existing in many branches of business, it is inevitable that the working hours of the partners and the working hours of the cooperative are partially incompatible. Although the studies investigating common cooperative relations were mostly focused on providing administrative and agricultural input, satisfaction level was found high in Agricultural Sales Cooperatives. While in Kendirlioğlu's study (2008) conducted with Tarış

partners the presence of satisfaction was revealed, in the study of Kara et al. (2016) conducted with the partners of agricultural development cooperatives in Bolu and Düzce, it was stated that there was 63.8% level of dissatisfaction. Alçiçek and Karlı (2016) stated in their study in Burdur that 57.69% of Agricultural Credit Cooperative members, 42.31% of Beet Growers Cooperative members, and 20.00% of Fishery Cooperative members were satisfied with the current management.

Table 4. SERVQUAL Scale Dimensions
(Çizelge 4. SERVQUAL Ölçek Boyutları)

Expressions (İfadeler)	Average (Ort.)	Standart Deviation (Std. Sapma)	Satisfaction Percentage (%) (Memnuniyet Yüzdesi (%))
Tangibles (Somut Özellikler)			
Çukobirlik has a modern-looking equipment.	3.25	1.235	64.99
Çukobirlik buildings and offices are pleasing to the eye.	3.37	1.185	67.50
Çukobirlik employees have clean and proper looking.	4.40	.719	88.00
The items and materials used while serving in Çukobirlik are pleasing to the eye.	3.83	1.017	76.64
Total	3.72	.829	74.40
Reliability (Güvenilirlik)			
Çukobirlik fulfills its promises on time	4.15	.772	83.00
Çukobirlik employees show a sincere interest in solving the partners' problems.	4.26	.714	85.15
Çukobirlik provides the right service at the first time.	4.16	.740	83.15
Çukobirlik provides a service as previously promised.	4.18	.734	83.68
Çukobirlik is very sensitive about keeping the records error-free.	4.52	.628	90.40
Total	4.25	.584	85.00
Enthusiasm (Heveslik)			
Çukobirlik employees tell their partners exactly when a service will be provided.	4.27	.682	85.47
Çukobirlik employees provide fast service to their partners.	4.30	.694	85.97
Çukobirlik employees always want to help their partner.	4.40	.657	87.94
Çukobirlik employees are never too busy to answer their partners' requests.	4.30	.763	85.92
Total	4.31	.568	86.25
Assurance and Competency (Güvence ve Yeterlilik)			
The behavior of Çukobirlik employees arouses confidence in their partners.	4.39	.695	87.71
Çukobirlik partners feel safe while their transactions are being made.	4.45	.685	89.07
Çukobirlik employees are always kind to their partners.	4.45	.621	89.07
Çukobirlik employees have the knowledge to answer the questions of their partners.	4.39	.652	87.89
Total	4.42	.572	88.49
Empathy (Empati)			
Çukobirlik takes care of each partner individually.	4.26	.648	85.12
Çukobirlik working hours are arranged in accordance with all partners.	4.21	.756	84.18
Çukobirlik has employees who are personally interested in each partner.	4.25	.711	85.00
Çukobirlik keeps the benefits of its partners above everything else.	4.09	.878	81.76
Çukobirlik employees understand the special requests of their partners.	3.92	.967	78.39
Total	4.15	.625	83.02

RESULTS

Since the existence of mankind, people have been trying to make their life easier by collaborating,

working together and cooperating. Agriculture, which is as old as the history of humanity, has been practiced in cooperation. Social and economic development in

developed and developing countries is based on cooperatives. Cooperatives are used as an important tool in spreading democracy, ensuring peace, protecting the environment, creating employment, mobilizing resources and creating investments in the world (Topuz and Bozoğlu, 2015). Cooperatives have a wide range of practices from production to consumption. However, it is more common in agriculture and rural life due to its population and widespread effect. Democracy, which is the main feature of the cooperatives principle, is focused on increasing the benefits of all partners within the framework of equal rights regardless of the farmers' property assets. In addition to the high diversity of agricultural activities, the fact that the production factors of farmers are not equal, the uncertainties arising from the nature of agricultural production, the production depends on certain periods and conditions, the low capital turnover, and the low share of the producer in the product value chain necessitates the organized movement. With the full implementation of the principles and articles of association, cooperatives offer advantageous opportunities for the economic and social development of rural residents engaged in agricultural activities.

The success of all stages of agricultural products starting from the field, the garden and the feedlots to consumption depends on the success of the organization in this field (İnan, 2001). The question of what the economic and social effectiveness of the rural development and agricultural sales cooperatives as an economic and social initiative in Turkey that increase their activities in the market is comes forward. The ability of cooperatives to increase their this effectiveness is to reveal what their partners' perceptions and thoughts regarding the cooperative are and to make improvements in the areas where there is dissatisfaction. In the study, it was determined that the partners have the highest satisfaction from Çukobirlik services in the field of assurance and competency, but it was also observed that their satisfaction level is low in terms of tangibles. Improving the physical elements in all units in this sense will be effective in the partners'safety and satisfaction levels.

Producing cost-effective and quality goods and services can be counted among the values of cooperatives. Cooperatives are also businesses that are sought after for fair pricing, solidarity, and uniting producers and consumers without intermediaries. Due to these functions, it facilitates the producers' service or production under free market conditions. It makes the producer more durable in the competitive environment and ensures its survival. It guarantees to the consumers that the goods or services they will receive are of good quality and reasonable prices. Cooperatives, in a sense, act as insurance in the

market by ensuring that there are also businesses that have the power to compete with businesses operating in the private sector in the free market. Continuation of this is possible by supporting sustainable production with a strong brand. The market share of cooperative brands is increasing day by day. For cooperatives with wide production patterns such as Çukobirlik, the value of creating a retail brand will be unquestionably high. Volunteering and willingness of the partners to sell their products to Çukobirlik (86.5%) is an important data that the attempts to be made in this regard will be successful. However, Haseki's determination (2007) about Çukobirlik's having a marketing mentality that is far from being consumer oriented is taken into consideration, the competency and initiatives of the cooperative management in this regard should be focused rather than the producers' volunteering. In the field of agriculture, if the enterprises cannot differentiate against the similar products of their competitors with the brand they own, consumers cannot see any difference as a reason of preference when comparing with similar products at the time of purchase. Differentiation is very important for customer loyalty. For this differentiation, the creation of a cooperative brand such as Torku, Tariş, Marmarabirlik is essential. Differentiation in the eyes of the consumer is also important in terms of the extent to which the product and service differ against competitors and whether this differentiation carries any value. The most important difference in food products can be created by highlighting "safety". Because, consumers' looking for healthier and safer food and their consumption have been increasing. Cooperatives are the institutions that will give the most correct answer to consumers' search for safety in food products. Especially in the Covid-19 pandemic process, proper hygiene conditions in agricultural products and ensuring the continuity of agricultural production will be possible through cooperatives. Controlled production and packaging and flow directly from the producer to the consumer can be done by cooperatives. Thus, the added value is created by the partners through the cooperative. On the other hand, the continuity of the food supply is also the subject of the discussion in the Covid-19 pandemic process. In addition to the completion of agricultural activities carried out with manpower, on time and under necessary qualifications, it is possible to ensure the continuity of this process by securing agricultural workers. The solution to this is possible with cooperatives. In recent years, cooperatives have started to become widespread in order to increase consumer benefit in addition to producer-oriented formation. Therefore, the cooperative is an important model not only for those who produce goods and services, but also in the social field. These cooperatives emerge as an organizational model that responds to changes in the business world (Esim and Katajamaki,

2017). Worker cooperatives are among the most important ones in social cooperatives. There are 84,799 worker cooperatives in the world. These cooperatives have 4,369,600 members and their annual turnover is US \$ 124 billion (Anonymous, 2020b). The Covid-19 pandemic once again left the agricultural sector vulnerable to nature due to quarantine and social isolation. Many countries have limited or stopped their exports of agricultural products in case of a food crisis. In this process, the disruption of agricultural activity not only put the nutrition of the whole society at risk, but also put the employment of agricultural workers at the bottom of the income distribution at risk. In addition, disruptions in producers' transactions such as timely harvesting on time and transportation caused a decrease in income. World history has witnessed many crises and it is doubtless that it will happen from now on. For this reason, in order to ensure reliable production of basic consumption goods, cooperatives should act as workers' agencies in order to ensure healthy production. These measures need to be taken faster for a region such as Çukurova, where production continues for 4 seasons continuously and has an important share in the country's herbal production.

Cooperatives, which balance the economic life, have the power to make social life more balanced. Cooperatives, especially the institutions where small and medium-sized producers come together, will ensure the continuity of production and prevent unemployment by ensuring their institutional sustainability under competitive free market conditions. It will increase living standards, create a safer social environment by ensuring economic security, and prevent individuals from becoming disadvantaged.

Author's Contributions

The contribution of the authors is equal.

Statement of Conflict of Interest

Authors have declared no conflict of interest.

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